Islam

Luke J. Buhagiar, Gordon Sammut, Evrinomy Avdi, Ifigeneia Koutri, Anna Mylona, Alina Pop, Alessia Rochira, Rozlyn R. Redd and Alfonso Santarpia

L. J. Buhagiar · G. Sammut
University of Malta, Msida, Malta

E. Avdi · I. Koutri · A. Mylona
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Thessaloniki, Greece

A. Pop
"Dimitrie Cantemir" Christian University, Bucharest, Romania

A. Rochira
Università del Salento, Lecce, Italy

R. R. Redd
Imperial College London, London, UK

A. Santarpia
Université de Sherbrooke, Sherbrooke, Quebec, Canada

Introduction

Contemporary Europe is home to what are known as "traveling Islams" (Le Vine, 2003, p. 100), that are not bound by particular geographical locations, are characterised by internal differences, and both influence and are influenced by the cultures and economies they encounter. This presence brought with it a plethora of dynamic representations of Islam in Europe (Helbling, 2012). In order to investigate these representations, large-scale empirical evidence is needed (Vanparys, Jacobs, & Torrekens, 2013), which should in turn be informed by knowledge of the sociocultural conditions of localised contexts (Sammut & Buhagiar, 2017). The study of representational content (cf. Sammut, Andreouli, Gaskell, & Valsiner, 2015a) therefore requires a plurality of methods (cf. Cinnirella, 2012, p. 185). The present chapter contributes to the methodological repertoire by presenting media analysis findings on representational trajectories of Islam in six European countries, namely Greece, Italy, Malta, Romania, France and the UK (the study was conducted pre-Brexit). A review of contemporary representations is first presented, followed by the analyses undertaken and a discussion of results in light of a potential spiral of conflict (Sammut, Bezzina, & Sartawi, 2015b) between non-Muslims and Muslims in Europe.

Contemporary Representations of Islam in Europe

Rapidly changing sociopolitical landscapes in Europe, including but not limited to the recent migration crisis, were inevitably coupled with representational change. A necessarily selective review of the literature on representations of Islam in Europe revealed three dominant representational domains, each encompassing varied and interrelated content. These domains concern:

• Islamic values and culture;
• migration and integration;
• terrorism and crime.

This review allowed us to take stock of the current climate in terms of the dominant social (Sammut & Howarth, 2014) and other representations.

Islamic Values and Culture

In offering a genealogical sketch of the Muslim Other, Semati (2010) argues that culture came to have explanatory power in the post-cold war period, whereby Islamophobia became an ideological response conflating multiple Middle Eastern dimensions into a single, unified and essentialised Islam. Through attributions of having a bounded nature, Islamic culture came to be viewed as incompatible with European culture. Arguments from cultural differences became dominant in two contrasting ways. They can support both representations of the Muslim Other as inferior, but also a position of understanding and acceptance vis-à-vis the Other and perceived differences (Semati, 2010). These are in fact two recurring dominant representations of Muslims in Europe (cf. Said, 1978).

Whether it is inferiority or difference that is made salient, representations of Islam seem to be largely essentialist, that is, Islam is viewed as an essentially homogenous, discrete and different entity (see Phillips, 2010). 'Islam' and 'Islamic culture' are also conflated with other categories such as 'Arabs' and 'Arabic culture'. For example, interchangeable notions of an essentially Islamic and/or Arabic culture serve to legitimise anti-integrationist views regarding Arab migrants in Malta (Buhagiar, Sammut, Rochira, & Salvatore, 2018), a country where the Maltese majority and other non- Arab ethnocultural minorities converge in their antipathy towards Arabs (Sammut & Lauri, 2017). A shared essentialised view of Islam can potentially serve affiliative functions (see Duveen, 2008) among non-Muslim Europeans, and goes along with the need for temporal and collective continuity within national cultures. For instance, in Italy it is specifically Islam that represents the challenge of cultural and religious pluralism (Allievi, 2014). In the Netherlands, perceptions of Christian cultural continuity predicted opposition to Muslim immigrants (Smeekes & Verkuyten, 2014).

An exclusionary view of Islam is also linked to national heritage in Greece, where negative representations of public displays of Islamic worship circulate (Hatziprokopiou & Evergeti, 2014). Furthermore, essentialist representations might explain the absence of media portrayals ofMuslims and their daily lives (e.g., in soaps or reality TV in the UK) (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010). Muslims came to represent a monolithic yet hybridised threat, consisting of elements of both realistic (security-related) and symbolic (cultural) threat (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010). Conflations of the notions 'Muslim', 'Arab' (Buhagiar et al., 2018) and 'terrorist' (Cinnirella, 2012, p. 180) have potentially synergistic negative representational effects. Moreover, even when quantitative studies strictly compared Islam and other

non-ethnic religious categories, Muslims were still perceived as a source of fear (e.g., in the UK; Bleich & Maxwell, 2012, p. 43). Representational valence for Islamic values and culture thus remained negative, regardless of research design. Beyond valence, Europe has had a variegated reaction to what are deemed to be contrasting Islamic values. Accordingly, in France, a "missionary mind" seeking to free Muslims from their religion, which is seen as oppressive and obscurantist, is dominant (Geisser, 2010). In the Netherlands, media representations posit Islam as a threat to Western values or as a backward religion jeopardising national identity (see Verkuyten & Poppe, 2012, p. 137).

Negative representations also feature among the political classes (Moosavi, 2015). A previous media analysis did not find systematic negative representations of Muslims between 2001 and 2012 in British newspaper headlines, but right-oriented newspapers did have more negative content than left-oriented newspapers, and overall representations of Muslims were still more negative than those of Christians or Jews (Bleich, Stonebraker, Nisar & Abdelhamid, 2015). The notion of a delineated Islamic culture is a common topic and unifying enemy for the far right in Europe (Shooman & Spielhaus, 2010, p. 203). Therefore, towards the more radical ends of the spectrum, negative representations of Islam do play into the hands of the far right, but not exclusively. Assimilationist views, negative stereotypes of Muslim communities and implicit representations of European versus Islamic values also feature in the centre left (Moosavi, 2015). Hijabophobia is also not exclusive to the far right and is well documented in Europe (Mohamed-Salih, 2015, p. 91, for Romania; Geisser, 2010, for France). Such nuances lead to a consideration of the prescriptive functions of social representations and the different projects towards which communities aspire through their sense-making (Bauer & Gaskell, 1999; Sammut et al., 2015a, p. 7).

Talk of cultural differences features equally among anti-racist movements promoting minority rights, as it does in right-wing movements advancing separatist claims (Garner, 2012, p. 130). Therefore, different groups utilise similar representations for different ends. Representations themselves can be channelled through different argumentative strategies for particular ends. In Greece, political-ideological argumentation among groups sympathetic to Muslim migrants pushes for tolerance of religious diversity, while cultural-identity argumentation pushes against this (Triandafyllidou & Kouki, 2013). This makes the basis of intolerance in Greece an ethnocultural one, a basis that differs from that in other European countries like Denmark, France or the Netherlands, where intolerance is grounded in the perceived failure of multiculturalism, and in liberal principles such as autonomy and equality (Triandafyllidou & Kouki, 2013; Mouritsen & Olsen, 2013, p. 128). Non-Muslim Europeans are thus engaging in differing forms of rhetorical and identity negotiations. At the same time, such negotiations are also being undertaken by Muslim communities themselves, as can be seen when considering migration.

Migration and Integration
In Europe, Muslims experience daily pressures, with some opting for ontological identity functions by adhering to Islamic practices despite difficulties, others opting for pragmatic identity functions by violating some Islamic teachings in order to ease social difficulties, and others pursuing onto-pragmatic strategies combining the two approaches (Sartawi & Sammut, 2012). Religion can also serve as an assertive tool in diasporas. Retreatism, defensive essentialism and engagement are all political strategies being pursued by Muslim communities across Europe, and engagement is not a viable strategy for all (Kinnvall & Nesbitt-Larking, 2011, p. 27). France's universalist laïcité, for instance, ignores how Christianity has been institutionalised through customs and cultural objects in France, creating an asymmetrical political atmosphere (Kinnvall & Nesbitt-Larking, 2011, p. 128). Such asymmetries underpin representational content and may further an emerging spiral of conflict (Sammut et al., 2015b) between host countries and resident Muslim communities (Sammut et al., 2018).

In terms of actual representations, the study by Bleich and Maxwell (2012, p. 45) cited above also found that when Muslims were compared to ethnic, racial or immigrant groups (not exclusively to religious groups), attitudes towards them were negative *but almost never the worst.* This serves to reiterate the point on synergism and conflated representations: even when Islam is not seen as *the* problem, other adjuncts can serve to represent it as a problem. Regardless of conflation, in a study on Maltese participants' arguments concerning the presence of Arabs in Europe, no positive religious (pro-Islam) arguments featured in favour of the integration of Arabs whatsoever, whilst arguments against Islam and Islamist terrorism were plenty. One major representation concerned fears of crucifix removal in schools due to a heavier Muslim and/or Arabic presence (Sammut et al., 2018). Similar results were

previously obtained by Darmanin (2015), where assimilationist sentiments prevailed among Catholic interviewees, which they justified with reference to Malta's Catholic identity.

These findings can be better understood in light of historical and contextual representations. There are longstanding relations and tensions between Malta and Arab states (Chircop, 2014). For many Greeks, "Turkey and Islam are one and the same" (Sakellariou, 2017), thus even here one finds representations of Muslim migrants tied to ethnic categories. In Malta religious schooling is an issue, whereas in Greece the need or lack thereof of a mosque (one started being built in 2017 after decades of discussion) is an issue. In Greece, concerns with national identity, criminality and terrorism similarly feature vis-à-vis Muslim migrants (Sakellariou, 2017). For instance, a historical anti-Ottoman interpretation of national identity underlies the Islamophobia promoted by parties such as Golden Dawn (Sakellariou, 2017). Katsikas (2012) further argues that Islamophobia reaches well into the historiography of Greek-Turkish relations and the academic institutions that produce such knowledge.

Similarly, experimental data showed that a Christian historical narrative of the Netherlands can mobilise people to increase their opposition towards Muslims' rights, despite avowed weak commitments to national identity (Smeekes, Verkuyten, & Poppe, 2011). Islam is tied to particular ethnic/national groups in the Netherlands as well (e.g., with Moroccans and Turks; Dekker & Van der Noll, 2012, p. 115). Therefore, it is also exceedingly unclear whether Islamophobia is about Muslims or more about migrants from Arabic countries (Helbling, 2012, p. 5). Treating Islam as a reified category in social research is bound to lead studies into definitional labyrinths, as identities are never singular and representations are rarely, if ever, about just one entity. However, for the purposes of getting at representational content, this conflation of identities is not necessarily problematic, and it is less so in a diachronic analysis of media articles where such a conflation becomes simply a corollary of diversified and evolving representations over time. Conflations aside, Muslims seem to be perceived as the enemy other along both religious and migratory lines, especially by far right nationalists (Kinnvall & Nesbitt-Larking, 2011, p. 62).

Terrorism and Crime
Also at the heart of many nationalisms is the Westphalian idea of a nation-state (Kinnvall & Nesbitt-Larking, 2011), which terror activities threaten by virtue of being trans-national. Representations of terrorism are particular in that Islamist terrorism is not encountered on a daily basis in Europe. Such representations are thus sustained through media representations where terrorism and the correct political response towards it are continually debated. For instance, following the 7/7 London attacks, media representations were even more dichotomous and deplored political correctness in British politics (Shaw, 2012). In Romanian media, terrorism is presented specifically with regards to the weakness of EU politicians and criticisms of leftist political correctness (Pop, 2016). These representations of self and other are laden with imperatives for political action. In the UK media, Muslims are regularly portrayed as criminally deviant, and this furthers representations of Islam as an "undifferentiated global aggressor" (Poole, 2006, p. 102). For some Europeans, the term 'Muslim' automatically brings with it thoughts of 'terrorism' (Cinnirella, 2012, p. 179), serving a heuristic function. Whether it's the idea that Muslims use terrorism to destabilise Europe actively (see Buhagiar et al., 2018), the conflation of Jihadis and Muslims (Darmanin, 2015) or generalised anti-Islamic propaganda (Pop, 2016), the link of Islam with terrorism seems to persist in the media and European public spheres. Concerning non-terrorist crime, a regular line of argument seems to be that immigrants, including Muslim immigrants, are more likely to engage in crime because of their poor living conditions (Figgou, Sapountzis, Bozatzis, Gardikiotis, & Pantazis, 2011). This argument implicitly acknowledges the plight of migrants, documented in Sammut et al.'s (2018) study cited above, together with representations of asylum seeking as a right. Dialectical tensions pertaining to both fear and acknowledgement of the Other feature in representations of social groups and their employment for differing rhetorical ends across social groups (see Billig, 1988). Muslims are also largely aware of media representations portraying them as terrorists or ultra-conservatives (e.g., Brown, Brown, & Richards, 2015). Therefore studying changes in representations over time is a crucial endeavour in understanding conflict.

The Present Study
Representations of Islam/Muslims in Europe seem to be predominantly negative, yet they are in constant flux and the nuances in representations should not be glossed over. Moreover, the phenomenon of Islamophobia needs to be historicised (Grillo, 2003). For instance, there have of course been large scale political changes from 18th century France (where Muslim countries were seen as liberal; see Geisser, 2010) to the emergence of disadvantaged Muslim immigrants in *banlieues* (Kinnvall

& Nesbitt-Larking, 2011, p. 31). Similarly, tensions between Greece and Turkey are longstanding (Katsikas, 2012). Revealingly, Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking (2011
p. 44) note that the label "Muslim" had little meaning in the UK until the 1990s. The point is that representations, whether social, media and/or historical, are not static (Howarth, 2006), and are always specific to particular contexts, informed by a host of sociocultural factors (Sammut & Buhagiar, 2017). A diachronic approach therefore supplants the myopia incurred by synchronic analyses and sheds a micro-historical light on the matter.

Method
The present analysis is based on sociocultural psychology and semiotics, namely the concept of semantic structures (Salvatore & Freda, 2011; Valsiner, 2007). Semantic structures are dichotomous, oppositional dialectical linkages grounding and shaping representational content. Each representation can be conceptualised as being composed of multiple semantic structures. For instance, the representation "Muslims are terrorists" could result from a combination of the semantic components *outgroup* (contra *ingroup*) and *threat* (contra *resource*). Given the bivalent conception of meaning within semiotic analysis, semantic structures can be modelled as polarities comprising dialectical linkages between two oppositional meanings. Accordingly, making one pole of the structure salient entails neutralising the other (Salvatore, 2016). We now proceed to present the method used for studying changing representations of Islam/Muslims in Europe between 2000 and 2015. The diachronic analysis consisted of a retrospective analysis of representational evolution. We studied the semantic structures and thematic content comprising representations through a quali-quantitative analysis of newspaper articles. Newspaper content was studied synchronically and diachronically across six different European countries. Due to a paucity of articles in certain temporal blocks, no diachronic analysis was conducted for Malta, and two temporal blocks were excluded for Romania.

Sample and Temporal Blocks
A total of 4741 newspaper articles were selected from a set of local and national newspapers in electronic format (Table 1). Selection was random, based on the criterion of maximum variability, whereby sample validity is not determined by its representativeness but by how closely it reflects the population's variability (Salvatore, 2016). This avoids neglecting relevant articles that are relatively scarce. The period 2000–2015 was segmented in five two-year blocks for analysis: 2000–01; 2004–2005; 2008–2009; 2011–12; and 2014–15.

Keywords
To identify keywords endowed with discriminative validity, preliminary analyses concerning word frequency and co-occurrences were performed. A set of English keywords and their combinations was decided upon, and translations to Greek, Italian and Romanian were pursued. The final list of keywords (*Arab! AND Muslim! OR Arab! AND Islam! OR Muslim! AND Islam!*) was then applied to newspapers. Synchronic analysis of the whole corpus was conducted using the same parameters (e.g., criteria for segmentation and lemmatisation) as those employed for the diachronic analysis concerned with specific temporal blocks.

[Insert Table 1 here]

Automated Co-occurrence Analysis for Semantic Mapping

To process large amounts of data and guarantee homogeneous operational criteria for comparison purposes across analyses, Automated Co-occurrence Analysis for Semantic Mapping (ACASM) was conducted using T-Lab 16-Plus (Salvatore, Gennaro, Auletta, Tonti, & Nitti, 2012; Salvatore et al. 2017). ACASM is based on a semiotic view of meaning (Valsiner & Rosa, 2007). Co-occurrences among lexemes within the same contextual units (e.g., a paragraph of the text) constitute signs. The method detects co-occurrences among lexemes using a multidimensional procedure combining correspondence analysis and cluster analysis. ACASM procedures were conducted for the whole time period 2000–2015 and for separate temporal blocks. This involved:

• digitisation of the article corpus;
• multidimensional analysis; and
• interpretation of semantic structures.

Digitising the Corpus

The first step involved digitising the article corpus in order to conduct ACASM. The article corpus was transformed into a matrix composed of segments of text as rows and lemmas as columns. Each cell within the matrix contained information concerning the presence/absence of a particular lemma within each segment. Digitisation involved: segmentation of the text; lemmatisation of lexical forms; and selection of lemmas for use in multidimensional analysis. Segmentation involved dividing the corpus into elementary context units (ECUs). These are units of analysis or segments consisting of groups of contiguous utterances. The ECU had to be long enough to be interpretable in terms of thematic content but short enough for each unit to be associated with a specific thematic content. Accordingly, article paragraphs were adopted as ECUs. Lemmatisation was aimed at reducing lexical variability, as ACASM requires a reduction of data dispersion. Lexical forms, mostly words, were categorised according to the lemmas they belong to. Lemmatisation was performed by means of the T-LAB vocabulary for Italian and English, and by means of a vocabulary built ad hoc for Greek and Romanian. Useless lemmas (e.g., stop words, empty words, indexical words, and basic auxiliary verbs) were excluded using the T-Lab list of stop words. The five most frequent lemmas were excluded since highly frequent lemmas can act as noise. This step resulted in the selection of the 1000 most frequent lemmas apart from the first five lemmas.

Multidimensional Analysis

ACASM was then performed on the data matrix, to map patterns of co-occurring lexemes characterising the articles. Correspondence Analysis detected the semantic structures on which the article corpus can be modelled by reorganising relations between lexemes as dichotomous factorial polarities. Each pole became characterised by a set of signs that tends to co-occur whilst not occurring in the opposite pole. Accordingly, these polarities can be viewed as the operationalisation of semantic structures constituting representations of Islam. Factorial dimensions are markers of semantic components within such semantic structures. The outputs of multidimensional analysis thus involved the main factorial dimensions per country (i.e., semantic structures underlying representational content).

Interpretation

These outputs were subsequently interpreted by the research teams gathering data in the six different countries, who operated on consensus. Interpretation was first aimed at detecting semantic structures. The main factorial dimensions produced during Correspondence Analysis were thus defined and abductively reconstructed along two opposing factorial poles. A subsequent interpretation was carried out in accordance with the methodology adopted by Salvatore (2016) and indirectly validated the first interpretation.

Results

This detailed analysis resulted in findings consisting of thematic content nested beneath opposing factorial dimensions for Greece, Italy, Malta, Romania, France and the UK. The latent semantic structures (synchronic analysis), together with synchronic cross-country comparisons, are presented below. Also presented are the interpretations of the first two reliable factors for temporal blocks per country (diachronic analysis).

Synchronic Analysis. Latent Semantic Structures Underlying the Press Representations of Islam

This section presents interpretations of the first three reliable factors (i.e., those with enough lemmas) for the synchronic analysis per country (lemmas are italicised and in parentheses). These factors point towards latent semantic structures related to representations of Islam in these respective countries.

Greece

Factor 1: Situated Phenomenon Versus Global Issue On the one hand, one finds the cultural characteristics of Islam, both as way of life (*child, man, husband, life*) and as religious practice (*Muhammad, prophet, God, Muslim*). Contrarily, Islam is represented as an international matter, particularly as a foreign policy issue set against a global backdrop (*USA, EU, government, Syria, Turkey, NATO, Russia, power, interest*).

Factor 2: Threat Versus Recognition The second factor opposes an identification of Islam with terrorism (*attack, kill, police, dead, protester, embassy, fire, army*) to a vision of Islam as being part of Greek and European culture and history (*Greek, society, religion, history, modern, European, culture, century, historical, art*).

Factor 3: Domestic Versus Foreign Affairs
On one pole, Islam is related to national politics, or seen as a political issue within the national agenda (*minister, president, MP, Pasok, election, party, vote, representative*), whereas on the other pole, Islam is connected with other countries (especially in the Middle East) and seen as something to be dealt with as a foreign affair (*Middle East region, power, interest, conflict, Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, war*).

Italy
Factor 1: Global Issue Versus Situated Phenomenon On one pole, Islam is framed as an international issue, as a foreign policy matter set against a global scenario (*west, Iraq, United States, regime, war, Bin Laden, Iran, Syria, military, army, Libya*). On the opposite pole, Islam is viewed as a religious practice (*mosque, worship, prayer, Ramadan, Imam, faithful*) embedded in the daily life of Muslims in Italy (*place, mayor, community, Milan, downtown, city*).

Factor 2: Recognition Versus Threat The second factor opposes a vision of Islam as a social, religious, and historical phenomenon (*society, religion, identity, values, politics, culture*) to dialogue with (*dialogue*), to a view of Islam that identifies it with terrorism (*Charlie Hebdo, attack, to kill, Isis, death*) and violent social change (*square, demonstration, Tripoli, Gheddafi, Bengasi, police*).

Factor 3: Politics Versus Religion On one pole, Islam is considered as a security issue (*security*)—fought against by organisations with Islamophobic political views (*Lega, Carroccio, leghista*)—that must be kept under political control by the Italian government (*minister, government*). On the other pole, Islam is depicted as a religion (*god, Koran, book, Allah, Mohammed, prophet, holy*) associated with belligerent traits (*kill, die*).

Malta
Factor 1: Situated Phenomenon Versus Global Issue On one pole, Islam is associated with the life of immigrants in Malta (*immigrant, migrant, document, Malta, Maltese, island*), and presumably with integration issues. It is also acknowledged in its cultural aspects (*culture, cultural, contribute*). On the opposite pole, Islam is represented as a foreign policy issue, related to international conflict (*attack, force, Palestinian, rebel, Israeli, militant Syria, war*).

Factor 2: Power Versus Powerlessness Great economic power (*oil, price, Saudi*) is associated to Islam on one pole of this factor. On the opposite pole, the difficult condition of refugees and asylum seekers—escaping war and misery—is evoked (*station, Greece, borders, Lampedusa, asylum seekers, boat, migrant, African*).

Factor 3: Threat Versus Recognition The third factor juxtaposes the association between Islam and criminal and terrorist attacks (*police, magistrate, attack, kill, Bin Laden, victim*) with the association between Islam and economic systems (*oil, price, global, market, economy, tax, Saudi, benefit*).

Romania
Factor 1: Threat Versus Recognition The first factor opposes a vision of Islam that identifies it with terrorism (*terrorist, attack, assault, Bin Laden*) to an acknowledgment of the historical Muslim community settled in Romania (*Muslim, religion, Imam, mother, parent, orthodox church, Christian, Romania, Bucharest*).

Factor 2: Global Issue Versus Situated Phenomenon On one pole, Islam is associated with international conflict in the Middle East area (*Middle East, Israel, Jordan, Jerusalem*), and related waves of immigration to Europe (*Europe, Greece, immigrant, refugee*). On the opposite pole, Islam is embodied in the internal threat represented by a young Romanian (*Luigi Constantin Boicea*) who converted to Islam and was arrested for terrorism.

Factor 3: Politics Versus Religion On one pole, Islam is embodied in the socio-political situation of predominantly Islamic countries (*Bangladesh, Libya, Tripoli, Benghazi, Dubai*) and the related phenomena of emigration/immigration (*immigrant, foreigner, worker, refugee, asylum, ambassador*).

The opposite pole depicts Islam as a religion that has potential for radicalisation (*God, religion, Koran, prophet, Allah, holy, radical, Bin Laden, terrorist*).

France
Factor 1: Threat Versus Recognition On one pole, Islam is identified with death, war, and terrorism at the global level (*Bin Laden, Taliban, USA, Afghanistan, Al‑Qaeda, Hamas, military, war, terrorist, attack*). The other pole depicts Islam as part of French culture, history, and political debate (*Islam, France, secularism, Koran, Debate, veil, meaning, society, identity*).

Factor 2: Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Versus Global Conflict On one pole, Islam is connected with Israeli-Palestinian conflict (*Gaza, Israeli, Hamas, Palestinian, jewish*). On the opposite pole, Islam is framed within the context of international conflict (*Bin Laden, USA, Pakistan, Europe, Turkey, war).*

Factor 3: Religion Versus Politics On one pole, Islam is depicted as a religion (*mosque, Imam, Ramadan, veil, prayer*) associated with terrorist groups (*Bin Laden, police, attack, prison, group, hostage*). The opposite pole addresses Islam as a political global issue involving international actors (*Europe, Turkey, Israel, Hamas, Obama, Iran, world, politics, democracy, war, peace*).

United Kingdom
Factor 1: Global Issue Versus Situated Phenomenon One pole associates Islam with the Middle East and its political and security crisis (*Palestinian, Israeli, Gaza, Iraq, Hamas, attack, military, war, Syria*). The opposite pole links Islam to the integration of Muslim immigrants in the UK, especially within the education and healthcare systems (*education, school, industry, service, college, community, healthcare, university*).

Factor 2: Measures Versus Personal Stories One pole presents the program of economic and political measures (presumably related to services and governance in Iraq and Afghanistan) (*voluntary, executive chief, industry, local government, service, director, healthcare, education, manager, international, Iraq, Afghanistan*). The other pole associates Islam with the lives of Muslim families, especially wives and daughters (*love, family, baby, daughter, husband, father, life, son, mother, girl, woman*).

Factor 3: Recognition Versus Threat Islam as a political issue to be dealt with, and about which political parties debate, characterises one pole (*election, vote, party, political religious, candidate, democracy*). The other pole concerns terrorism and the Islamist threat (*kill, police, bomb, Bin Laden, attack, arrest, die, soldier, convict, shot, killing*).

[Insert Table 2 here]

Cross-Country Comparisons
There was a high degree of similarity amongst semantic structures underpinning representations of Islam/Muslims across countries. *Situated phenomenon versus Global issue* featured in all countries except France. *Threat versus Recognition* featured in all six countries. Furthermore, *Politics versus Religion* featured in Italy, Romania and France (Table 2).

Diachronic Analysis
The interpretations of the first two reliable factors for the temporal blocks are presented below, showing the evolution of representations of Islam over time. This analysis highlighted various similarities across Greece, Italy, Romania, France and the UK (Tables 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 respectively). The findings especially demonstrate continuity in representations of Islam/Muslims over time, whereby Islam as a representational object retained its negative valence: Islam is represented as a global political problem and a domestic threat. Polarisation can also be seen, with the notion of Islam as threatening to Europe contrasting with notions of hospitality towards migrants and the salience of their personal stories (e.g., in Romania and the UK).

[Insert Table 3 here]
[Insert Table 4 here]
[Insert Table 5 here]
[Insert Table 6 here]

[Insert Table 7 here]

Discussion

This study explored changing representations of Islam in Europe. Of particular interest is the diachronic dimension of the findings, showing the continuity of issues concerning violence and oppression over time. Also evident are certain semantic structures that were more pronounced in the synchronic analysis across the whole 2000–2015 period. *Recognition versus Threat* is one of them. This polarity was sometimes reflective of sympathy versus antipathy. Yet clearly interpretable normative dimensions were not always present. This ambiguity possibly reflects the ambivalence in representations of Islam/Muslims in Europe. It also echoes Vanparys et al.'s (2013) warning against academic assumptions concerning hegemonic negative representations of Islam.

Notwithstanding this sound warning, representations were indeed overwhelmingly negative at worst, or neutral or ambiguously positive at best. Negative representations might not require the presence of Muslims themselves to take root. For instance, in Italy (and possibly other parts of Europe), Islamophobic discourse started arising before there was any real (contemporary) presence of Muslims there (Allievi 2014; Vanparys et al. 2013). Media representations of terrorism can have such effects, whereas normalising representations of Muslims and their daily ways of living might require actual presence to take root. Synchronically, one observes high degrees of similarity across countries. This similarity extends to a total of three semantic structures (*Situated phenomenon vs. Global issue*, *Threat vs. Recognition* and *Politics vs. Religion*). Italy and Romania resulted with all three. France resulted with both *Threat versus Recognition and Religion versus Politics*. Although *Situated phenomenon versus Global issue* featured in all countries except France, the latter pole featured in France in a slightly different manner, that is, as *Global conflict*.

Specificities were also present in two ways. Firstly, similar semantic structures underpin different thematic content depending on how they manifest themselves in different countries. Similar semantic structures do not necessitate similar representational content. The same semantic structure polarises patterns of lexemes that can vary across countries, due to both geopolitical factors and also local sociocultural circumstances (Sammut & Buhagiar 2017). Even when similar semantic structures or poles having the potential for positive valence appeared across countries, those of them actually indexing thematic content sympathetic to Islam less ambiguously were still very few. In fact, their scarcity warrants mentioning. Arguably, these were: *Recognition* (Italy, France), which included notions of dialogue, particularly in the case of Italy; *Situated phenomenon* and *Powerlessness* (Malta), which included notions of sympathy towards migrants' misery and possible cultural contributions by migrants; and *Situated phenomenon* and *Personal stories* (UK) which indicated sympathy towards everyday lives of Muslims and the possibility of integration. Yet, the cross-country comparison showed that *Recognition* and *Situated phenomenon* also indicated some content that remained predominantly descriptive (or normatively ambiguous) in other countries (e.g., Greece, Malta, Romania and the UK for *Recognition*; and Greece and Italy for *Situated phenomenon*). More explicitly, *Religion* pointed towards belligerence and radicalisation in Italy, Romania and France, echoing Sammut et al.'s (2018) findings on the lack of semiotic resources for constructing
positive representations of Islam.

Secondly, the particular combinations of semantic structures and their respective thematic content can guide the synergistic effects of representation towards different directions (cf. Jaspal & Cinnirella 2010). Combinations across countries might thus eventually disturb the continuity observed across temporal blocks so far, with possible further polarisation being already visible. For instance, one could argue that the semantic structure *Threat versus Recognition* did in fact consist of poles of contrasting normative valences, that is, negative and positive. This projects Islam in terms of a persecutory foe versus an object endowed with value or at least worthy of being valued in some respect, be it culturally (Greece, France), dialogically (Italy, France), economically (Malta), community-based (Romania), or politically (UK). Other semantic structures had different architectures indexing different thematic content but at similar levels of generality. For example, *Situated phenomenon versus Global issue* and *Measures versus Personal stories* are both based on the dialectic between individual/local versus systemic/universal processes. These polarities take the form of a dialectic between particularity and generality. This dialectic can be found in opposed semantic components indicating the practical life of people vs. systemic requirements (e.g., economic or legislative). Here, the valence could be negative on both sides, for example, contrasting conflict (*Global issue*) with an internal threat (*Situated*

phenomenon) in Romania. Others, like *Measures versus Personal stories* (UK), come with no clear valence under certain interpretations, or else a potentially positive one for individual/local processes (i.e., *Personal stories,* as discussed above).

Despite the various combinations of valence and dialectic present, it seems clear from the analyses that squarely negative representations of Islam seemed to persist over time. Indeed, the diachronic analysis showed that representations of Islam/Muslims in Europe are marked by relatively stable temporal continuity, together with geopolitical variations. Therefore, it is precisely the different evolution of representations (Sammut, Tsirogianni, & Wagoner, 2012) across nation states that represents a challenge to the European Union in terms of innovative policy approaches. The semantic structures that stood out the most across countries and time were those treating Islam as a global political threat that is to be dealt with politically on an international level. This may partly explain the persisting view of Islam as an "undifferentiated global aggressor" (Poole, 2006, p. 102), and may unify the political imperatives inherent in negative representations of Islam. Islam is also represented as a cultural threat, due to migration and terror-related activities. Notable exceptions are perhaps France and the UK, where— alongside socio-political notions of conflict—notions related to the recognition of Islam, and the personal stories of Muslims, respectively, have remained salient over the years.

Conclusion

Our findings concur with the literature concerning the predominance of negative representations of Islam in Europe. Such representations unfortunately promote aggressive policies directed towards Muslims in Europe (Poole 2006, p. 102). At the same time, representations relating to humanitarian concern, intercultural dialogue and the ways of life of Muslims are significant in proportion, indicating possible polarisation in representational content over the years. The method employed involved large-scale computerisation, as advocated by an emerging line of research (Bleich, Bloemraad, & de Graauw, 2015; Salvatore et al., 2012; Vanparys et al., 2013). Large-scale evidence provides policy makers with knowledge that is closer to local scenarios, allowing them to target particular representations in their work (cf. Lauri, 2015, p. 397). We also concur with Dekker and Van der Noll (2012, p. 113) that, at least on a functional level, it is important to study Islamophobia specifically because it is a main explanatory factor behind behaviour towards Muslims. This complements representational approaches. In conclusion, the main limitation of this study is the vagueness inherent in the interpretation stage. To address this limitation and complement large-scale analysis, future research can focus on idiographic data analysis that minimises the need for post hoc interpretation whilst still allowing for systematicity (see Sammut et al., 2018).

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